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Citizens spread awareness about saving Pune hills

PUNE: It was an early Sunday for more than 300 citizens as they gathered at Vetal tekdi behind Law College road to spread awareness on the [Save Pune Hills' campaign](#).

The campaign led by the Green Pune Movement saw participation from various non-governmental organisations, green activists, industrialists and school children.

"The GPM is a people powered movement working to improve the environment. In December 2005, the [Pune Municipal Corporation \(PMC\)](#)

approved an excellent Development Plan (DP) for the 23 merged villages which included a bio-diversity park on the hills of Pune. But, the government of Maharashtra has till date not sanctioned this the green DP. It is believed that the state government is now seriously considering scrapping the park, and allowing for four per cent construction on our hills. The hills will be destroyed," said Bhanu Mulay, of GreenPanch, an NGO fighting against the construction on hills.

The campaign saw participation from industrialist Arun Firodiya, who said, "When we actually walk to the hills we know the beauty of nature. Construction here will spoil this beauty. If we don't wake up now, when would we?"

Eminent environmentalist Madhav Gadgil, who is supporting the cause, wrote a message on the same. His message was read out on the occasion.

Gadgil said in his message: We have declared that we wish to maintain 33 per cent of our land under forest cover. In hill areas this should be as high as 60 per cent. What perverse logic is it then that we must not insist on planting trees, but raising buildings on the barren hills of Pune, and that too against the clearly expressed wishes of citizens of Pune?

He further said, "Overcrowding in cities leads to exacerbating problems like traffic congestion and disposal of sewage and solid waste. The move to waste enormous amounts of energy in lifting water up the hills and in promoting more and more uphill traffic is incompatible with the attempts to reduce the city's greenhouse gas emissions."

Gadgil added, "Pune citizens must pursue with spirit their demand that there should be no construction on the hills, but that they should instead be the site of a bio-diversity park."

The GPM is part of the 350.org -- an international grassroots campaign that aims to mobilise a global climate movement.

A peace pledge' written by filmmaker [Srirang Godbole](#) was taken by the participants at the Vetal tekdi wherein the gathered vowed to restrict construction on hills.

Urban planner Anita Benninger-Gokhale, MLA Vandana

Chavan, Satish Khot of [National Society for Green Cities](#) among others were present.